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A DESCRIPTION OF THE HIGH PEAK OF DERBYSHIRE:

TOGETHER WITH

AN ACCOUNT OF POOLE'S HOLE,

AND SOME OTHER REMARKABLE PLACES,

HITHERTO CALLED

The WONDERS of THAT COUNTY.

EXTRACTED FROM

A TOUR through PARTS of ENGLAND, SCOTLAND, and WALES.

MANCHESTER:
PRINTED BY C. WHEELER.

M,DCC,LXXXVIII.

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DESCRIPTION

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HIGH PEAK of DERBYSHIRE:

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BRITISH MUSEUM

A TOUR through PARTS of ENGLAND,
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A DESCRIPTION OF THE PEAK IN DERBYSHIRE, &c.

IT is very neceſſary that thoſe who travel for information, ſhould furniſh themſelves with the beſt account of every thing they find worthy particular attention, otherwiſe the principal uſe of their labours is loſt. To explore the hidden ſecrets of Nature, and view the elegant erections of Art, are certainly delightful purſuits to the ſpeculative mind, and at the ſame time afford rational entertainment, and ſolid inſtruction.

It would probably conduce much to the certain information of the public, if travellers were furniſhed with a good deſcription of the principal places worthy of notice, as it might point out immediately the moſt proper objects of obſervation, and greatly help their enquiries. The following Deſcription of Peake's Hole, in Derbyſhire, &c. is extracted from the Tour of Mr. Sulivan, and as it is written with a vigour that is likely to intereſt the Reader, we ſhall proceed to give the words of the Author without any farther preface.

The approach to this cavern (ſays he) is grand and tremendous; a river iſſuing from its mouth runs to your left, and a range of rocks, rearing their heads to the ſkies, ſurround you. One of theſe is meaſured two hundred and fifty-one feet perpendicular. Being arrived at the entrance,

entrance, which is forty-two feet high, and one hundred and twenty feet wide, the attention is caught by a moſt uncommon ſight. Cottages ſcattered up and down in this dark abode, and a multitude of women and children ſpinning at wheels; in every reſpect it carries the appearance of another world: nor does the animated proſpect confine itſelf; for the merry creatures, who are thus employed, extend themſelves ſo far, as to form a perſpective which in imagination ſeems to have no end. The firſt information you receive from your ruſtic conductor, who is the naturaliſt and philoſopher of the place, is the manner in which water congeals itſelf to ſpar. "At firſt it is," ſays he, "but a tranſ-"parent drop; by the air it afterwards "becomes a clay, and then gradually "forms itſelf into the petrefaction."

The next thing you are deſired to obſerve is the Flitch of Bacon, a large

large incruſtation hanging on one ſide, which you quickly paſs by, and then come to a ſmall door, which affords you the moſt ſtupendous view of a concave you can conceive. On, however, you go, ſtooping till you get into the Bell Houſe, and thence paſſing along, you are ſhewn a line, about the height of your ſhoulders, at which the water arrives in the time of heavy rains. Hence, ſtooping conſiderably, you come to the river, on which there is a boat, into which you get, and lying at full length to ſave your head from the impending rocks, you are thus ferried over, or rather carried up a winding ſtream, till landing, you fancy yourſelf arrived in the firſt apartment of the infernal deities. Nothing can be more ſtupendous than the appearance of this dreary *ſalle du ſouteraine*. The length of it, as meaſured, is two hundred and ſeventy feet; the width two hundred and ten; and the height

height one hundred and twenty. Stopping here to enjoy the gloomy horrors of the ſcene, a number of candles are diſperſed, which twinkling like ſtars, afford an awful aſſemblage. The return of the boat, however, with other paſſengers, immediately beneath you, ſtretched in the like cautious manner, and paddling through a hole ſcarcely large enough for a man to creep in at, is ridiculouſly whimſical.

Leaving this, you get to a winding of the river, which you paſs upon the ſhoulders of your guides, and thence arrive at Roger Raine's Houſe, ſo called from drops of water, which inceſſantly filtrate through every part of it. From this you continue to the Chancel, where calmly proceeding, you are ſuddenly accoſted by the voices of a choir of men chaunting in a niche above you, at the elevation of above fifty-ſeven feet. No terrene art could produce ſo wonderful

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an effect. The vaulted roof rent into a thouſand ſhapes; the height of the cavern itſelf; the ſtillneſs of the ſcene, ſaving the patterings of the water in the rainy cell; altogether, the uncommon admixture of the ſublime and beautiful. Here we ſtopped. The airs were ſlow and ſolemn, which were ſung: every thing conſpired to turn the mind to meditation. Nature appeared in awful, though frightful majeſty before us: in a word, we could not but fancy ourſelves tranſported to another world.

From the Chancel you continue to the Devil's Cellar. Hence you proceed by a ſandy hillock, deſcending gradually one hundred and fifty feet, and at length come to the Half-way Houſe, as it is called, where you have a fine tranſparent run of water, and where you are ſhewn how rain and ſnow, penetrating through the earth, force themſelves into the cavern, and often occaſion an alarming

ſwelling

ſwelling of the torrent of the river. Paſſing on, you proceed through three moſt regularly, though naturally-formed arches near the borders of the river, whence you fancy you hear the rumbling of a caſcade: and then croſſing the river, come to another range of equally as beautiful arches, which conducts you, with the river on your right, to the hanging rock, and a petrified ſnake, in high preſervation.

From this ſpot you get to the place where the current rolls rapidly along, the water diſtils in abundance down the ſides, and where we perceived the remains of mud left upon the rocks, when the cave, as it frequently is, was laſt filled with water. Still continuing, and paſſing through another range of arches, and Tom of Lincoln, ſo called from its reſemblance to a bell, you at length get to the extremity of this wonderful place, two thouſand two hundred

and fifty feet from the entrance, and ſix hundred and twenty-one feet beneath the ſurface of the hill.

This, however, is not ſuppoſed the end of the cavern; and as a conſiderable ſtream of water runs through a ſmall opening at the extremity, many people think it continues farther.*

Before I quit this ſpot, I muſt not omit mentioning the ſtaggering effect of a blaſt, as they ſtile it, occaſioned by a ſmall quantity of powder crammed into a rock, and ſet fire to. The exploſion is wonderfully grand: heaven and earth ſeem coming together. All viſitors are treated with this ſalute, and we, of courſe, had our ſhare of it.

The ſpirit of curioſity had ſo warped our rational faculties, and danger was become

* Not long ſince a gentleman determined to try if he could not dive under the rock, and riſe in the cavern which is ſuppoſed to be ſtill beyond it: he plunged in, but, as might be expected, ſtruck his head againſt the rock, and fell motionleſs to the bottom, from which the attendants, with difficulty, dragged him out.

become ſo familiar to us, that we determined upon a plan that wiſer men would have ſhuddered at the idea of. This was no other than the exploring a prodigious cavern, ſaid to be three miles in length, and ſtrongly ſuppoſed by the miners to have a communication with the Peak Cavern, as they inſiſt upon it the ſame river runs through both. Summoning therefore a *poſſe-comitatus* of all the miners about Caſtleton, we in brief told them our intention. Aſtoniſhment at firſt prevented them from thinking us ſerious: none but two or three had ever ventured upon a trial; and even cuſtom had not reconciled the others to ſo hazardous an enterprize. A promiſe of reward, however, prevailed upon the whole, and they agreed to attend us in the morning. In the mean time a meſſenger being diſpatched to Sheffield for torches, we began, with all due form, to prepare for our deſcent: this was

ſoon accompliſhed. A paper of memorandums, and a card, in caſe of an accident, telling who our friends were, and where they were to be found, were left upon our table in the inn. Thus guarding againſt the worſt that could befal us, at leaſt ſo far as it reſpected matters which we ſhould no longer have any concern in, we early the next morning, accompanied by a choſen ſet of our guides, repaired to the top of the mountain, where the ſciſſure opens itſelf about three feet in diameter. Provided by the miners with proper dreſſes, we then ſtripped ourſelves of our own outward apparel, and putting on each a pair of canvaſs trowſers, a flannel jacket, and over that a canvaſs frock, with a handkerchief round our heads, and a miner's cap, we proceeded one by one down this dreadful abyſs, for the diſtance of about four hundred and twenty feet perpendicular.

Imagination

Imagination can ſcarcely form a deſcent more perilous. The only ſteps or things to hold by, are bits of oak ſtuck into the ſides, inhabitants of the place ſince it was firſt diſcovered, and which, from want of uſe, it was natural to ſuppoſe might have either rotted or looſened themſelves in the earth; moreover, a falſe ſtep hurled one inevitably to deſtruction: fortunately all was firm, and we arrived at the bottom unhurt. Here ranging ourſelves in order, with a large bundle of candles and torches, independent of the candles which each of us carried, we proceeded with tolerable facility through two or three lofty and moſt beautifully enamelled caverns of ſpar. This we conceived an earneſt of future delight, and the tablets were accordingly ſet at work; but, alas, how great was our miſtake. Here our difficulties were to commence.

Following the guide, who beſides another

another who was with us, was the only one of the party who had ever penetrated before, we forced our way with infinite ſtruggles, through a narrow ſpace, between two rocks, and thence getting on our hands and knees, were, for the full diſtance of a mile, obliged to crawl without ever daring to lift up our heads, the paſſage being both low and craggy, and as it was likewiſe filled with mud, dirt, and a multitude of bits of rocks, our progreſs was painful indeed: we ſtill, however, hoped for ſomething better. On we accordingly proceeded, till a dreadful noiſe, rumbling along the horrible crevices of the cave, gave us to underſtand we were near a river: to this then we, as faſt as we were able, hurried. But deſcription is inadequate to any thing like a repreſentation of the ſcene. A vaſt ocean ſeemed roaring in upon us; in ſome places burſting with inconceivable impetuoſity, and at others falling

through

through dreadful chaſms, burſt into ſhaggy forms to give it vent: through this our journey was to continue. A cry of light, however, alarmed us: the confinement of the air, and the narrowneſs of our track, had extinguiſhed all our torches; the candles too, all but one ſmall end, were totally expended. We knew not what to do. In vain the miners halloo'd for the ſupply which was to have come behind; no anſwer was to be heard. Our fate ſeemed inevitable; but the principals of the party, fortunately, expreſſed no fear. In this extremity, a gallant fellow, who yet was ignorant of the place, but from experience knew the danger we were in, ſuddenly diſappeared, and after groping for a conſiderable time in the dark and diſmal horrors of the place, at length returned to us with a ſupply of candles, having diſcovered his companions unto whom they were given in charge, almoſt petrified

petrified with fear, and unable to follow us from apprehenſion. Reprieved in this manner from a death which ſeemed to wait us, in its moſt horrid form, we onward proceeded with a freſh recruit of ſpirits; and plunging into the river above our waiſts, ſcarce tenable from the impetuoſity of the torrent, cautiouſly picked our ſteps; and, at length, after a four-hours moſt unſpeakable fatigue, arrived at about three hundred yards beyond the ſpot, where the ſubterranean paſſage we had the day before explored, was expected to find an entrance into this dreadful place.

Here we were obliged to ſtop. A paſſage ſtill continued, but ſo filled with water, and ſo full of peril, that the miners themſelves were averſe to farther travel. Altogether, the depth we had deſcended was about one hundred and forty fathom, or nine hundred and eighty feet, and the length about three miles,

But, I muſt ſay, that I never wiſh even the greateſt enemy I have in the world, to be ſo unpardonably led by curioſity, as to tempt deſtruction, where, independent of the dangers of maims, cuts, and fractures, the falling of a ſingle ſtone might bury him in eternity for ever.

About a mile from Buxton is a cavern called Poole's Hole, which, though inferior in point of magnitude to the Peak, yet contains many curioſities. Cotton, in ſpeaking of the Wonders, ſays,

" The firſt of theſe I met with in my way,
" Is a vaſt cave, which, the old people ſay,
" One Poole, an out-law, made his reſidence;
" But why he did ſo, or for what offence,
" The beagles of the law ſhould preſs ſo near,
" In ſpite of horror's ſelf to earth him there,
" Is in our times a riddle, and in this
" Tradition moſt unkindly ſilent is:
" But whatſoe'er his crime, than ſuch a cave,
" A worſe impriſonment he could not have."

The hole at which you enter into this cavern is ſmall, and promiſes but little;

after advancing, however, a few paces, and creeping as close to the ground as you possibly can, you come to a chasm, where you are shewn Poole's Saddle and his Turtle, both of them good incrustations. Passing hence, you come to other fine pieces of spar, variously twisted round the rocks, called Poole's Tripe and his Woolsack, both inimitably honeycombed in the finest kind of white petrifaction; whilst a spring of clear transparent water issues from one side, and an exact resemblance of an elephant, with his proboscis hanging, strikes you at the other. From this place, throwing aside the pride of manhood, you creep upon all fours, and ascending a most slippery path, open a prodigious dome, sixty or seventy feet high, where you perceive an extraordinary large piece of spar pendent from the roof, called the Flitch of Bacon; and, staring in the side, the fanciful resemblance of old Poole himself.

himſelf. Hence you come to the Lion and the Lady's Toilet; the former ſpreading upwards, and the latter hanging down in all the careleſſneſs of eaſe and elegance. Theſe, however, conduct you but to greater beauties; the Dark Lantern, as it is called, which more reſembles the figure of the Ægyptian Sphynx; a vaſt quantity of incruſtation falling down in folds, and the roof ſparkling with tranſparent pieces of petrifaction of the ſhape of icicles. From this you come to an apartment, at leaſt fifty feet high, in which you have a ſmall black figure in ſpar, reſembling a mouſe, and a grand range of organs, as it were, immediately above it. Leaving this, you get to the Queen of Scots Pillar, ſo called by the unfortunate Mary, when ſhe viſited this place; a column, moſt beautifully ſurrounded with curtains of fine incruſtation, airily

diſplayed in the Gothic taſte. Here moſt people chooſe to ſtop; but we, urged by the ſpirit of curioſity, dared venture farther. Cotton, indeed, throws a damp upon the mind when he ſpeaks of this attempt; for, in his words,

"Over the brook you're now oblig'd to ſtride,
"And on the left hand by this pillar's ſide,
"To ſeek new wonders; tho', beyond this ſtone,
"Unleſs you ſafe return, you'll meet with none,
"And that, indeed, will be a kind of one."

On we went; the place ſo ſteep, ſo craggy, and ſo very ſlippery, that had it not been for faſt graſps, we ſhould never have been able to have got to the top. Here we ſtopped ſome time in admiration. A candle judiciouſly placed, without our knowledge, at the very extremity, peeped like a ſtar on a fine cloudy night, while another, as properly ſet at the bottom, whence we had aſcended,

had

had as ſingular and as awful an effect. Cotton, ſpeaking of this, ſays,

" Here, thro' a hole, your kind conductors ſhew
" A candle, left on purpoſe at the brook,
" On which, with trembling horror whilſt you look,
" You'll fancy 't, from that dreadful precipice,
" A ſpark aſcending from the black abyſs."

Hence, ſtill adventuring upwards, you paſs by the Lady's Pillion and a Curtain, both of them beautiful incruſtations; and thence paſſing through the eye of St. Andrew's Needle, and keeping his throne, or pavilion, to the right, which is a remarkable petrifaction, both from its ſize and reſemblance to its deſignation, you paſs over a heap of irregular rocks to a paſſage moſt emphatically and juſtly ſtiled, Break-back Paſſage. Here, crawling again, you at length come to the apparent end of this extenſive cavern (a ſmall aperture making it probable that it ſtill continues, although inacceſſible) at the diſtance of 2007 feet.

Trifling

Trifling as a diſtance of this kind may ſeem, it is yet wonderfully fatiguing to clamber over; for in many places the poet's words are far from hyperbolic:

" For, in ſeveral places among theſe, you meet
" With nothing worth obſerving but your feet,
" Which with great caution you muſt ſtill diſpoſe,
" Leſt, by miſchance, ſhould you once footing loſe,
" Your own true ſtory only ſerve to grace
" The lying fables of the uncouth place."

Returning, therefore, with as much, or rather with a greater degree of caution than we had entered, we at laſt, with ſome difficulty, got to the day-light; in our way having paid a viſit to Poole's Chamber and Parlour, in the latter of which is ſuch an hollow and reverberating ſound, that it is beyond a doubt there is a hideous cavern beneath.

Before we left this land of wonders, we went to view a very extraordinary place called Elden Hole. Here we indeed had matter for affright; a tremendous

dous yawning gulph, bottomleſs, as it is ſaid, opens its wide mouth on the ſide of a hill. The noiſe of ſtones, or any other body thrown into it, gradually, and as at a diſtance, dies away. Nothing has ever been heard of, that has fallen into it; all is inſcrutable to man. Trials upon trials have been made with reſpect to its depth; but all without effect. Cotton himſelf tried a line and plummet two thouſand ſix hundred and fifty two feet, but could not touch the bottom; neither could he at that time hear the water. We, however, fancied the contrary; for two ſtones, out of a prodigious number, which we plunged into it, moſt certainly immerſed themſelves in that element; but what, in our opinion, brought it to a poſitive demonſtration, was, an account given us by our guide, of a man who, within theſe few years, was let down two hundred and ten feet, and who declared, that, at

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the depth of about two hundred and forty feet more, there was water. In Cotton's time the lines were wet, which eſtabliſhed the certainty of that element; but the abyſs was not then ſo exceedingly filled with it as it is at preſent.

Many ſtories are told of accidents which have happened at this place; cattle frequently tumble into it. But nothing can be more dreadful than the acknowledgement of a villain, who, when on the ſcaffold for the perpetration of ſome other horrid deed, confeſſed the having thrown an unfortunate traveller into it, whom he had robbed, and who had entruſted himſelf to his guidance. Another inſtance of an untimely fate happened to a poor hind, who, eager for money, engaged, for a ſum, to go to the bottom. His errand proved fruitleſs; vapour, or fright, diſordered his ſenſes: he was drawn to the top, and expired in madneſs in a few days.

Having

Having viewed the moſt remarkable curioſities, we proceeded to Buxton. This place, though formerly very inconſiderable, is now become the reſort, in the ſummer ſeaſon, of the firſt people in the kingdom. The great utility of the Baths is undeniable, chemical judges allowing them to poſſeſs the efficacious qualities of both the Bath and Briſtol waters. The ſtupendous and elegant pile of building erected there by his Grace the Duke of Devonſhire, has greatly added to the importance and conveniency of the town, the whole of it being divided into ſhops, and houſes for the accommodation of travellers. It contains, beſides, a ſpacious aſſembly-room, decorated in a very elegant manner, no expenſe having been ſpared to render it one of the moſt ſuperb and finiſhed places of the kind. Theſe, added to other improvements which naturally follow, and ſanctioned by the reſort, during the

ſummer ſeaſon, of ſuch numbers of genteel families, certainly render Buxton of conſiderable conſequence, as a faſhionable watering-place.

The manufactory of the Derbyſhire Spar is conſiderable. The ornaments produced from it are in much eſteem, and are certainly very valuable, as the great natural elegance it contains, when aided by the refinements of art, makes it much ſuperior to moſt other decorations, and highly beautiful in appearance. Great variety of toys are alſo made of it, and, even in the ſmalleſt proportion, the richneſs and variegation of its colours render it exceedingly brilliant and pleaſing to the eye.

It has been diſcovered, that the ſoil or the air of ſome particular places in this country, have been almoſt as favourable to the preſervation of dead bodies, as the famous vaults of Bremen are

repreſented

repreſented to be. Two perſons are ſaid to have been loſt in a great ſtorm of ſnow, on the Moors, near the Woodlands, in Derbyſhire, on January 14, 1674, and not being found till the 3d of May following, they then ſmelt ſo ſtrong that the Coroner ordered them to be buried on the ſpot. They lay in the peat-moſs for twenty-eight years and nine months before they were looked at again; when ſome countrymen, having obſerved the extraordinary quality of this ſoil in preſerving dead bodies from corruption, were curious enough to open the ground, to ſee if thoſe perſons had been ſo preſerved; and they found them no way altered, the colour of their ſkin being fair and natural, and their fleſh ſoft as that of perſons newly dead. They were afterwards expoſed for twenty years, though they were much changed in that time by being ſo uncovered.

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